

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L NEW DELHI 14376

LIMDIS

FOR THE SECRETARY

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: OVIP (KISSINGER, HENRY A.)

SUBJECT: PRE-VISIT PRESS TREATMENT

REF: STATE 231736

1. IN THE PAST TWO WEEKS THE INDIAN PRESS HAS CARRIED A RISING TIDE OF COMMENTARIES AND REPORTS ON THE SECRETARY'S FORTHCOMING VISIT AND OVERALL INDO-US RELATIONS. WITH THE INDIAN PRESSES CLOSED DOWN OCTOBER 25 BECAUSE OF A HINDU HOLIDAY, MOST DAILIES HAVE OFFERED THEIR FINAL ASSESSMENTS IN THE PAST FEW DAYS. CERTAIN COMMON POINTS EMERGE AND ARE SUMMARIZED AS FOLLOWS:

2. MOST ENGLISH AND VERNACULAR LANGUAGE NEWSPAPERS, IN NUMBERS AND CIRCULATION, LIE SOMEWHERE ON A SPECTRUM OF POLITICAL MODERATION. THESE NEWSPAPERS HAVE VIRTUALLY ALL VESTED THIS VISIT WITH SPECIAL IMPORTANCE BOTH BECAUSE OF PAST STRAINS IN INDO-US RELATIONS AND BECAUSE OF THEIR OWN HOPES THAT THE SECRETARY (WHOM THEY SEE AS A MASTER GEO-POLITICIAN) CAN PUT RELATIONS ON A NEW, "MORE MATURE" BASIS. DIRECT PERSONAL CRITICISM OF THE SECRETARY -- RIFE THREE OR FOUR WEEKS AGO--HAS FALLEN SHARPLY AND HAS BEEN MOSTLY OUT OF VIEW IN RECENT DAYS.

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3. THE MODERATE PRESS VIEWS THE SECRETARY'S VISIT AS MARKING A SYMBOLIC END TO THE 1971 "TILT" AND PAST DIFFICULTIES AS WELL AS THE BEGINNING OF A NEW ERA OF NORMAL, FRIENDLY INDO-US RELATIONS. THE VISIT HAS ALSO BEEN DESCRIBED AS THE CULMINATION OF THE GRADUAL IMPROVEMENT OF INDO-AMERICAN RELATIONS SINCE THE ARRIVAL OF AMBASSADOR MOYNIHAN, BUT THE GENERAL FLAVOR OF CURRENT ANALYSIS IS THAT SUBSTANTIALLY MORE SHOULD NOT BE EXPECTED OVER THE NEAR TERM. THE MODERATE PRESS ALSO SPECULATES (IN FAVORABLE TERMS BUT WITH VARYING CONCLUSIONS) ABOUT THE DIMENSIONS AND TERMS OF THE WIDELY ASSUMED ASSURANCE OF US FOOD GRAIN ASSISTANCE AND THE IMPACT OF THE INDO-US JOINT COMMISSION ON FUTURE US INVESTMENT AND INDO-US ECONOMIC RELATIONS.

4. THE PRO-COMMUNIST PRESS, MUCH FEWER IN NUMBER BUT LOUD AND SHRILL AND WIDELY SCATTERED ABOUT THE COUNTRY, SOMEWHAT REDUCED THE INTENSITY OF ITS EARLIER CRITICISM OF THE SECRETARY, BUT CONTINUES TO ISSUE HEAVY WARNINGS TO MRS. GANDHI'S GOVERNMENT ABOUT ARRIVING AT AGREEMENTS WHICH MIGHT ENDANGER THE SELF-RELIANCE OR SECURITY OF INDIA. THE PRO-SOVIET COMMUNIST PARTY OF INDIA'S GENERAL SECRETARY ISSUED A STATEMENT OCTOBER 24 THAT THE CPI DID NOT OPPOSE IMPROVEMENT (A NEW LINE) BUT ADVISING THE GOI TO TELL THE SECRETARY THAT THE US CAN ONLY HOPE TO HAVE FRIENDLY RELATIONS WITH INDIA IF IT CEASES "CREATING TENSIONS IN OUR SUB-CONTINENT IN COLLUSION WITH MAOIST LEADERSHIP OF CHINA, SUPPLYING LETHAL WEAPONS TO PAKISTAN, DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY, PACK UP ALL THE CIA AGENTS FROM OUR COUNTRY, AND WIND UP THE DANGEROUS MILITARY BASE THEY ARE BUILDING UP AT DIEGO GARCIA." THIS THEME APPEARS IN ALL THE PARTY-LINE PRESS AND CAN BE EXPECTED TO CONTINUE.

5. THE HINDU FAR-RIGHT NEWSPAPERS, ALSO RELATIVELY FEW IN NUMBER BUT INFLUENTIAL ESPECIALLY IN NORTH INDIA, WHILE SHARING THE MODERATE PRESS' HOPES FOR IMPROVED INDO-US RELATIONS, REMAIN STRONGLY CRITICAL OF THE US ATTITUDE ON INDIA'S NUCLEAR EXPLOSION. THEY ALSO CAUTION THAT THE US MUST ABIDE BY ITS "ASSURANCES" THAT IT WILL NOT PROVIDE MILITARY AID TO PAKISTAN IF IT WISHES TO ESTABLISH AND RETAIN BETTER RELATIONS WITH INDIA.
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